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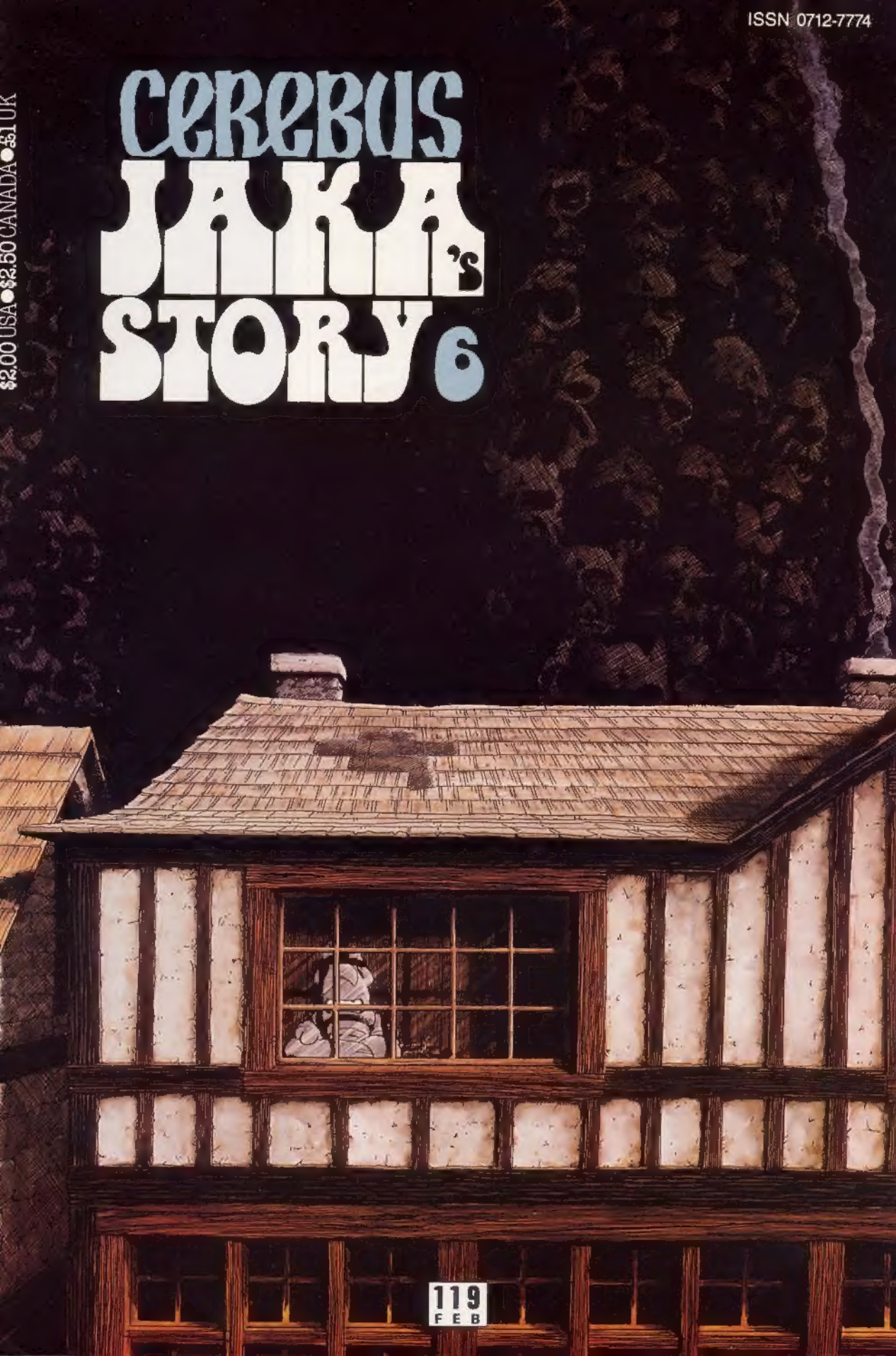
CEREBUS

JAKA'S STORY 6

$2.00 USA • $2.50 CANADA • £1 UK



119
FEB

NOTE • FROM • THE PRESIDENT

We have been more than fortunate with the critical reaction to this first book of *Jaka's Story*.

Hard to believe that we're already one hundred and twenty pages into the third Cerebus novel; rewarding in that no Aardvark Comment's and fan press reviews have ventured the opinion that *Jaka's Story* is boring. Rewarding because it was my intention that "Pogrom's Progress" was to be a very slow and monotonous introduction to the four principle characters - and further that the reader would discover that the four principle characters are very boring, ordinary people (like all of us). This is a dangerous sort of admission for a creative person to make since it tends to cause fan and reviewer alike to revise their opinion to conform to the creative person's view of his own work ("That's what I thought. I said *Jaka's Story* was boring six months ago") so, I'll elaborate a bit.

I wanted to see if I could portray boredom and monotony and make it interesting; because to me boredom and monotony *is* interesting and enriching. In point of fact boredom and monotony are, quite often, misnomers. A person can say he is bored at the exact moment fo a truly spectacular sunset ... or in a moment of real tranquility and inner peace. Canadians have a reputation for being boring. When Americans say this, I realize that this means that we don't kill each other often enough and when we do, the details of our homicides aren't sufficiently grisly to do a good movie-of-the-week; we don't sue each other for obscene amounts of money over mindless machismo; we tell the truth and expect others to do the same. Boring, right? To me the movies that feature a graphic act of violence every ten seconds; or a car chase; or an explosion are boring. I find most movies and almost all television programming boring. All of the 'rules' about keeping the action going; eye-catching camera work, quick cutting and fever-pitch pacing have painted these multimillion dollar media in hues of self-caricature (in much the same way that endless regurgitation of Neal Adams' innovations by lesser talents have made super-hero comics caricatures of themselves).

When I do watch television, it is usually the CBC French affiliate out of Toronto; and it is usually a European movie. For some years I've been drawn to the way they tell a story. I don't know enough French to understand what's being said, but I am sympathetic to a viewpoint that depicts two people conversing in a dining room, each measuring their words before speaking, changing their emotions incrementally, revealing their thoughts through gesture and expression as much as through their words. With the sound off, I begin to write my own story. I'm usually able to guess when the tone of a scene is about to change because all the subtle signals that would convey such a change are there; in the camera work, the directing, the editing and the acting. In most American films you only know something violent is about to happen because its been three minutes since the last act of violence.

Anyway, since I am rolling the dice - pushing the limits of what I think I can get away with until it includes what I *want* to get away with - I just thought I'd let you know that I considered Pogrom's Progress, after the escalation high of Church & State's ending, to be a high-risk experiment (twenty percent chance of scattered approval); and to thank everyone for their encouragement so I can give the limits an even harder push in "The Poet". Who knows where it will end?

Stay tuned and thanks.

Cerebus

NO. 119 FEBRUARY 1989

DAVE SIM
President

GERHARD
Vice-President

MONIQUE KAPTEIN
Administrative Assistant

Circulation
26,500

JAKA'S STORY
a novel

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PROLOGUE
(Cerebus 114)

•

POGROM'S PROGRESS
(Cerebus 115 to Cerebus 119)

•

THE POET
(Cerebus 120 to Cerebus 130)

•

MYSTERY ACHIEVEMENT
(Cerebus 131 to Cerebus 136)

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THERE FOLLOWED for Jaka, through the spring, summer and first weeks of fall of her sixth and seventh years, a lengthy period of convalescence. The insects, which had plagued and immobilized her for countless days, receded, at last, to the periphery of her sight until they were, once more, visible only in the still and darkness of the night.

Though her physical recovery was complete (except for a slight ringing in her right ear which did not disappear until she was fifteen) the child was changed. She remained fixed and staring and, were it not for the light of intelligence which shone from her eyes, she might have been thought dull-witted by a casual observer. She seemed impervious to the reception of impressions both benign and malignant; unaware of her surroundings; and unresponsive unless questioned directly. Her replies were brief and uttered in a hoarse whisper. Where possible a shrug or nod was made to suffice. Jaka's life had become, to her, a drama where she felt herself more patron than player with the former's assiduous reluctance to participate in the business unfolding upon the stage.

Jaka's dullness improved with practice (as does anything). She was ably assisted in her deterioration by the decision that she was now old enough to attend the weekly sermons of the Tavers' family's Priest of the Church of the Living Tarim (for such Lord Julius *et famille* considered him; a family retainer, comparable in rank to the pastry chef . . . or, in the case of a particularly *flattering* sermon, perhaps an efficient junior solicitor in the employ of one of the family's myriad law firms). To whatever degree Jaka's fall and ensuing injury were at fault for her ongoing condition it could be stated with a fair degree of certainty that said condition was scarcely improved by the once-weekly, four-hour priestly disertation rendered in an unflinching monotone, so sonorous, so low-pitched that it was said to deflect fog-bound ships from Palnu's ports when the church windows were left ajar in the summer.

For her part, Nurse attributed the transformation of her young charge to those centrifugal moments of 'scandalous adventuring', thereby conveniently overlooking her own role in the *catastrophe*. Nurse's only regret was that Jaka (having 'gone simple' as Nurse so compassionately phrased it) seemed now immune to invective and abuse; seemed hardly to notice them, in fact. Having a plentiful store of invective and abuse and a natural predisposition toward their generous usage, it was some time before this ineffectiveness became self-evident to the dour domestic.

Jaka endured.

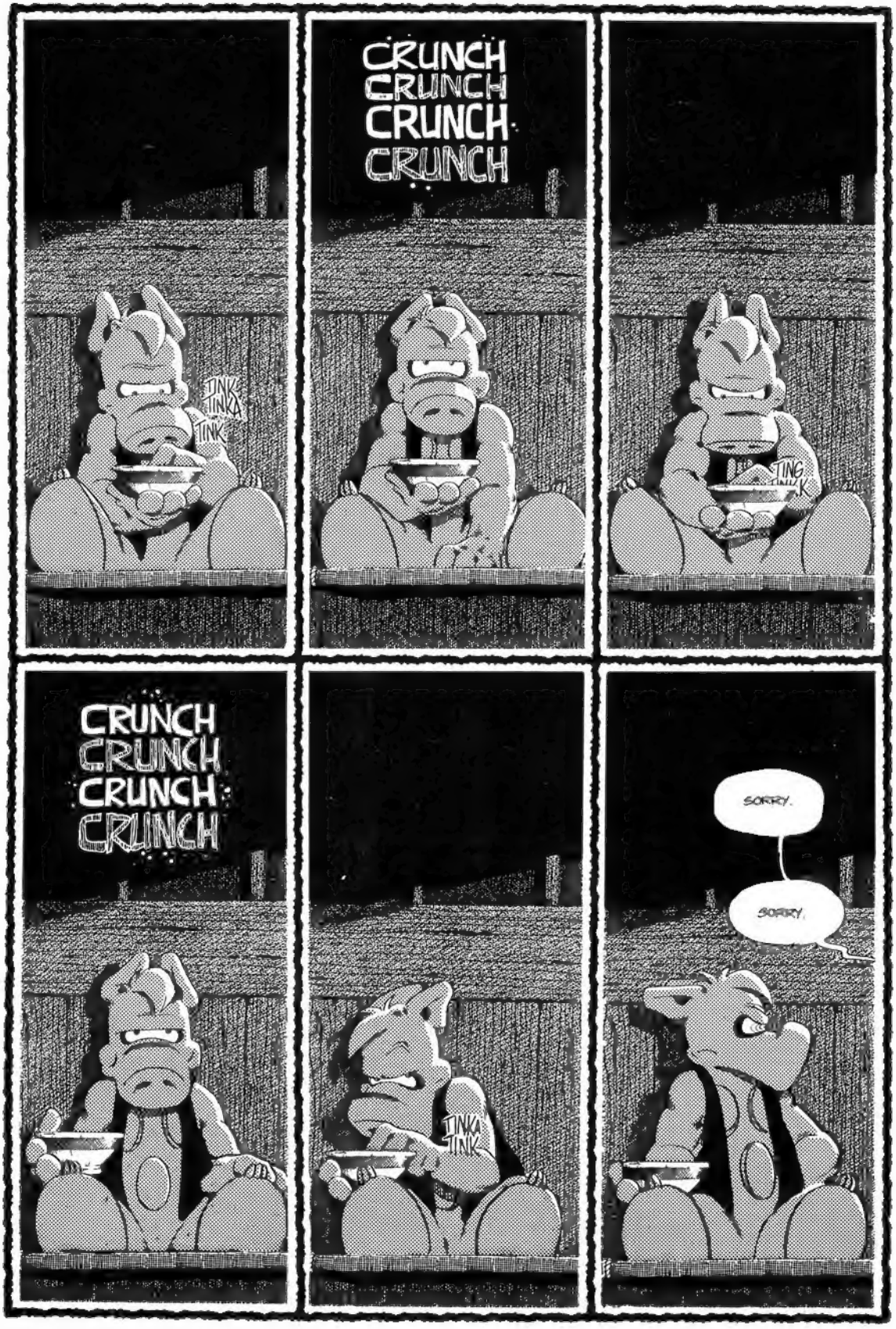
CRUNCH CRUNCH CRUNCH
RICK.
GLP
YOU'RE STARING AT HIM AGAIN.
SORRY.
SORRY.

I WANT TO KNOW. WHAT ARE YOU MAD ABOUT?
LET'S JUST SKIP IT.
WHY?
BECAUSE IT'S SOMETHING STUPID?
ALL
RIGHT
THEN.
YOU
DO
NOT
I REPEAT...
DO NOT ASK A GUEST IN MY HOME TO MAKE A PILLAR OF FIRE!!
I ASKED HIM IF HE KNEW HOW!!! IF! IF! IF!!

HER ENDURANCE was severely tested by the onset, in her eighth year of those daily rituals of torment and crushing futility known widely and inappropriately (given that nothing worth knowing can be taught) as 'Lessons'. The far-ranging inadequacy of these programs as devised by the flotsam and jetsam of Lord Julius' bureaucracy was compounded by Nurse's unremitting presence at Jaka's side. It was still another of Nurse's convictions that the most common means by which the proper development of a young mind was subverted by Men was in providing those minds with facts, merely, and, in so doing, depriving those minds of the surer (and more useful) knowledge of the consequences (oh, yes) lurking beneath the factual facade.

So it was that even the most elementary of Jaka's lessons was punctuated by sigh hove and tongue clucked; murmurs fraught with meaning; the noisy shifting of considerable body mass; and all manner of throaty cautionary notes sounded at each assertion no matter how innocuous or banal. And when, nerves frayed and temper rising, the Tutor sought some clarification of this mostly inaudible vote of non-confidence, Nurse would plead a 'discomfort' and fix the fellow with a gaze that dissuaded him (if he was wise, that is) from enquiring further into the nature of that 'discomfort'.

As for Jaka, she remained vacant and distant; no more responsive to her Tutor than she was to Nurse or the family Priest.


TINK TINKA TINK
CRUNCH CRUNCH CRUNCH CRUNCH
TING TINK
CRUNCH CRUNCH CRUNCH CRUNCH
TINKA TINK
SORRY.
SORRY.

Miss Jaka?

Yes, Pud?

My wife ... she's been dead for more than a year, now.

Oh, Pud, I'm so sorry ... I didn't ...

That's okay, Miss Jaka. She went peacefully and there wasn't much pain. Praise Tarim.

Praise Tarim.

Ever since then, why, I've been up here alone. Just doing maintenance on the properties, running my little grocery and my pub and just

Ever since then, I've been up here alone. With my thoughts.

It must have been dreadful for you.

But, it's different now that *you're* here, Miss Jaka. Every morning I look forward to you coming in for your groceries and every evening I look forward to your coming in to work in costumes where I can see

But it's different now that you're here, Miss Jaka.

How so, Pud?

Just ... not so lonely, I guess. You're a wonderful person.

Why, thank you, Pud. I think you're a

Miss Jaka. Why is it, that I call 'Miss Jaka' in the evening and 'Missus' during the day? And why is it you call me 'Pud' in the evening and 'Mr. Withers' during the day?

I don't know what you mean.

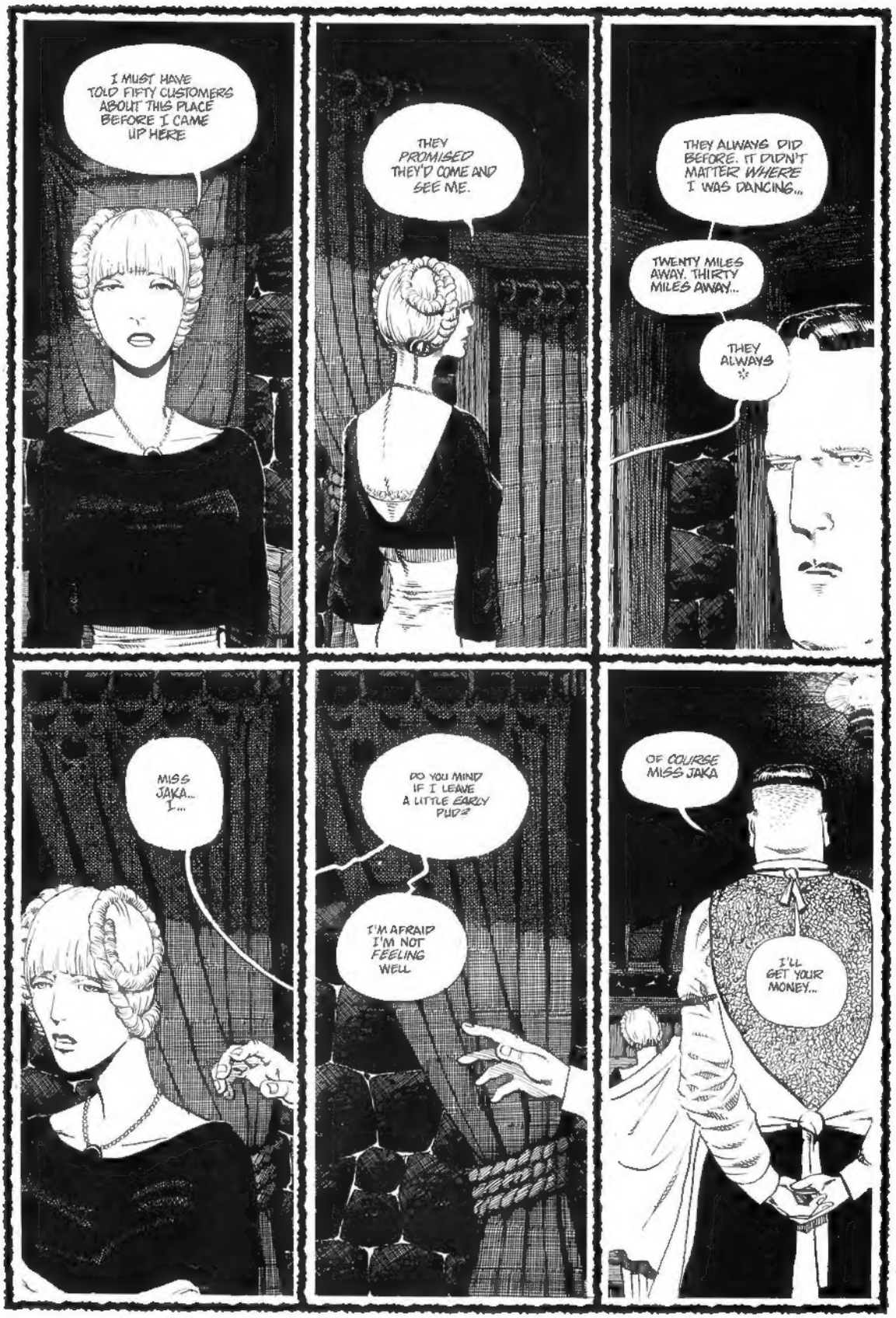
I think you *do*, Miss Jaka. I think you know *exactly* what I mean. Miss Jaka?

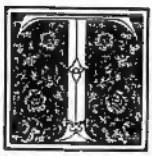
Yes, Pud?

My wife ... she's been dead for more than a year now.

Oh, Pud, I'm so sorry ... I didn't ...

That's okay. Miss Jaka. She died peacefully and


I MUST HAVE TOLD FIFTY CUSTOMERS ABOUT THIS PLACE BEFORE I CAME UP HERE
THEY PROMISED THEY'D COME AND SEE ME.
THEY ALWAYS DID BEFORE. IT DIDN'T MATTER WHERE I WAS DANCING...
TWENTY MILES AWAY. THIRTY MILES AWAY...
THEY ALWAYS
MISS JAKA... I...
DO YOU MIND IF I LEAVE A LITTLE EARLY PUD?
I'M AFRAID I'M NOT FEELING WELL
OF COURSE MISS JAKA
I'LL GET YOUR MONEY...



THERE WAS BUT a single locked door in the suite of rooms provided for Jaka and Nurse by Lord Julius' Chief of Staff in his capacity as Administrator of the Family Quarters. It was located in the long, narrow apartment entryway, a half-dozen metres from Nurse's bedroom doorway and a half-dozen metres from the front door which led to the outer portico and, thence, to the rose garden.

Jaka was aware of this Locked Door because, each morning after 'Rise and Shine', Bath, Dressing and Breakfast, it was required of Jaka that she wait quietly in the entryway while Nurse busied herself in her room (it was only an extraordinary circumstance, better left to the reader's imagination, that led your narrator to discover that Nurse, in these morning ministrations, was applying a layer of cream to her exposed skin. A cream which, she believed, killed air-borne lice, mite and tick eggs and the eggs of any other repulsive crustacean on contact. As this compound had been sent to her by her younger sister in Boreala in the guise of common cold cream . . . Palnu, at the time, evincing grave suspicions of any Northern Preparations having had a home-made paint demolish most of one suburb in an explosion and fire . . . Nurse was as parsimonious in its use as she could be, without the sacrifice of all necessary protection. Solicitous as she was of Jaka's welfare, she was loathe to share the precious cream, compensating for its absence with the hard brush and lye soap mentioned previously upon which she relied in the scrupulous keeping of wildlife from the child's orifi).

As her interest re-awakened into the sunlight of curiosity, Jaka had (after an intermission of three years) resumed her fascination with the Locked Door. She had discovered at quite an early age that the danger of incurring Nurse's wrath through the rattling of doorhandles ('Jaka? What's that noise?') was no danger at all with the Locked Door. Try as she might, twisting, pulling, pushing, wrenching: it was all the same to that polished brass lever and it remained perfectly immobile. Door and handle might have been carved from a single slab of quarried marble, then painted to resemble wood and brass, respectively, so unyielding was that polished, moulded fixture. Still, each morning as she waited for Nurse, Jaka pulled and pushed, attempted to rattle, attempted to coax, attempted to dislodge, however temporarily, however marginally, that brass pedal inset with sculpted leaves and flourishes. Finally, invariably, with open palm, she would rub her hand slowly over its entire surface, as if it were a magic lamp and by the rubbing of it, she might gain entrance to those Delights hidden from her.

For in her imagination, Jaka saw room after room of antique trunks and chests, rough-hewn boxes of all sizes and shapes brimming over with wine-yellow topzes, pistachio-coloured peridots, glowing emeralds, rubies of red fire, diamonds woven within braided settings of red, yellow and white gold, braziers and retorts of the finest silver, ancient jars and vases inset with fabulous gems worth a king's ransom. It was this same image which came to Jaka's mind, at dinner, when any of her relations would allude to the 'family fortune'.

The rubbing was to no avail, however.

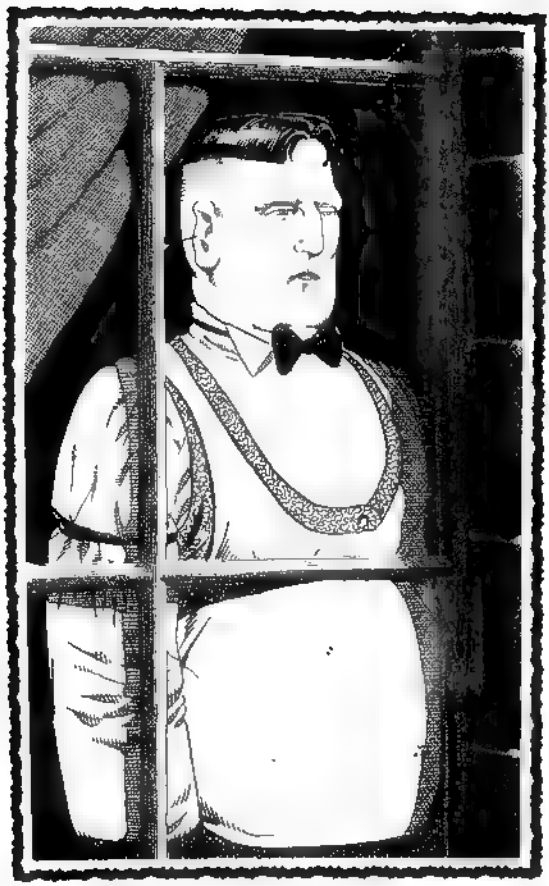
TO NO AVAIL UNTIL one day (a day like most any other day in all other respects) when she tried the door handle and found, very much to her astonishment, that it slid downward easily, in a shallow arc. And further that the door, now, swung inward smoothly and silently (so heavy was the Locked Door, in fact, and so warped its frame by a hundred seasons of swelling and an equal number contracting, that it very nearly slid from Jaka's grasp and it was only youthful reflexes which allowed her to arrest its momentum).

Beyond the threshold there were no chests over-flowing; no riches; no gems, no precious metals. Only a musty, abbreviated hallway, its tile edged in mould, its floor a patchwork of gray and yellow where the wax lay in a state of advanced decomposition beneath a translucent layer of dust. Overhead were two skylights, their panes smudged and streaked with the myriad residues of the elements. Here and there, wan tendrils of sunlight ventured cautiously around the grime of those panes; here and there, catching stray and winking dust motes disturbed by Jaka's intrusion.

There was scarcely time to ease the brass handle back into place and release the bolt slowly into the waiting door frame as Jaka heard the sound of Nurse's footsteps coming closer.

Jaka's heart was still pounding many minutes into their walk. She was flushed with excitement, recollection following recollection, her mind in turmoil. The skylights, the dusty floor, the vaulted ceiling.

And the door, part-way open, at hallway's end.



Just ... not so lonely ; guess. You're a wonderful person

Why, thank you, Pud. I think you're a wonderful person, too.

I don't know what I would do if it weren't for you I got used to being alone but I never cared for it

No one wants to be alone, Pud.

You're lucky you have a husband Miss Jaka. to take care of all your needs.

Yes. I am. I suppose I am.

What do you mean?

I don't know. It's just that sometimes ...

Yes?

This will sound silly.

No. Please. Miss Jaka. Tell me

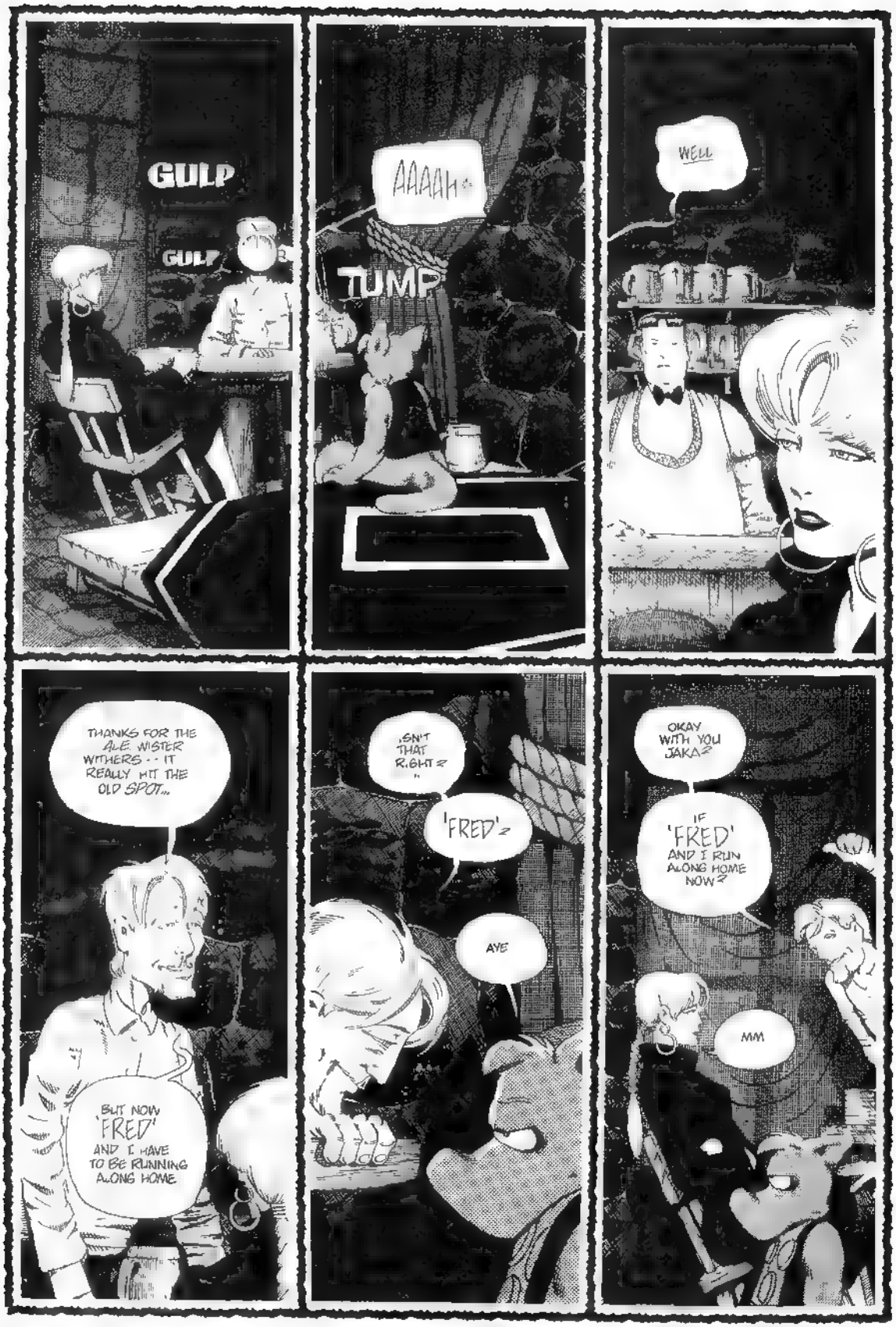
Sometimes I look at Rick and he seems, well, like ... such a little boy

I know what you mean.

Do you? Yes. I can see that you do. But I'm not a little girl and sometimes I think what I really need is someone ... older ; someone with more ... experience. I m not a little girl, Pud. I'm a woman.

A very desirable woman Jaka

Oh, Pud. I feel so strange. Hold me, Pud, hold me hold me hold me hold me hold me


GULP
GULP
AAAAH
THUMP
WELL
THANKS FOR THE ALE MISTER WITHERS -- IT REALLY HIT THE OLD SPOT...
BUT NOW 'FRED' AND I HAVE TO BE RUNNING ALONG HOME
ISN'T THAT RIGHT?
'FRED'?
AYE
OKAY WITH YOU JAKA?
IF 'FRED' AND I RUN ALONG HOME NOW?
MM

NOTICE HOW I CALLED YOU BY ANOTHER NAME IN THERE?
AYE
BEAUTIFUL NIGHT
ANOTHER ALE TOMORROW NIGHT EH?
GEE
HOW ABOUT LATER IN THE WEEK?
MY HEAD ALWAYS HURTS FOR A COUPLE OF DAYS AFTER I'VE HAD AN ALE..
'FRED' THOUGHT YOU WERE JOKING
HECK, NO THIS ONE TIME IT HURT FOR THREE DAYS

WELL I NEVER KNEW YOU FELT THAT WAY
WELL
NOW YOU KNOW
MAYBE .. IN THAT CASE... IT WOULD BE BETTER IF I JUST .. JUST..
MAYBE IT WOULD.
WOULD IT?
MAYBE IT WOULD
YOU MEAN THAT?
I DON'T KNOW I DON'T KNOW ABOUT ANYTHING ANY MORE
THE WAY YOU'RE BEHAVING EVERYTHING I SAY IS WRONG EVERYTHING I DO IS WRONG I'M WRONG
BECAUSE IT'S UP TO YOU I CAN LEAVE ANY TIME YOU DON'T WANT ME HERE
I NEVER SAID EVERYTHING YOU DO IS WRONG
LIKE.. WHAT?
IT DEPENDS ON WHETHER YOU'RE GOING TO BEHAVE LIKE THIS OR NOT
OH DIDN'T YOU?
NO I DIDN'T
OH DIDN'T YOU?
NO.
THIS IS POINTLESS I'LL LEAVE...
OH NO NO NO NO NO I'M THE ONE TO BLAME FOR ALL OF THIS...
I'LL LEAVE
DON'T BE R
I SAID I W

CRNCH CRNCH
TINK TINK TINK
CRUNCH CRUNCH
CRUNCH CRUNCH
TINK TINK
CRUNCH CRUNCH
TINK TINK TINK
CRNCH CRNCH
TINK TINK TINK
CRUNCH CRUNCH
TINK TINK TINK
KARUNCH!!

HIS INNER TURMOIL did not subside through the remainder of her eleventh year. Each morning she stood in that same doorway and each morning she was fascinated again by that same scene. In time she came to understand better the attraction of this musty sanctuary; that being, of course, that Nurse had no knowledge of its existence. *Had* she been aware that such untidiness was thriving nearby, Nurse would have been apoplectic (even more so, Jaka suspected, than she had been upon discovering a mouse in one of the pantry bins). Not only was it obvious Nurse had not set foot in that hallway, it seemed equally certain that the small army of faceless drones who swarmed about the family quarters, the servants who pushed her head gently, over her plate at dinner, the groundskeepers who manicured lawn and gravel, the custodians who polished each tile, shone each inch of brass banister, buffed each foot of marble mosaic, they too were strangers to this modest corner of Jaka's wee world. This place, this one place, was free of them. At times, in considering this, the fact of this one place, forgotten in the heart of the thriving, spotless, multi-faceted organism that was the House of Tavers Official Residence; in considering this, she would tremble slightly as though gazing into an abyss.

The walks to the playground, resumed around this time (one could say, as a kind of perverse counter-point), Almost-eleven Jaka sat by Nurse on the narrow bench and was regaled with dire warnings of the inevitable and humiliating onset of puberty, the living nightmare of unwed childbirth, the physical torture that constituted sexual congress, the cold animallistic brutality of boys and Men, the shameful ingratitude of off-spring, the unworthiness of childless women and the deplorable state of human existence in general, all these by the way of those charming fables, Cirin's Stories for Young Girls which, by some accounts, will soon be celebrating two thousand years of relentless, spirit-crushing success. Much as Jaka feigned simple-mindedness and so was able to dispense with the substance of these monstrous fictions, retaining little of their detail into her adulthood, so your narrator shall endeavour to do likewise, and so mention them no more.

Sitting there, on that bench, all that long and sultry summer, staring at a spot slightly forward and to the right of Magic, she felt within her, often, that same tremor that the Hidden World behind the Locked Door produced.

And, gradually, memories returned.

Fragmented they were and as difficult in their piecing together as the most intricate puzzle yet, in time, they formed a coherent whole; Nurse calling her name, the apron jumping and wavering before her, her urge to run, to flee the city: these were clear to her. On occasion, she even smelled ammonia high up in her nostrils and remembered losing consciousness most vividly when she had a head-cold and so, was able to hear her heart-beat, muffled, through the congestion in her ears.

But some key piece of the puzzle was missing and the thought of that caused an inexplicable and profound ache inside her.

Still, she thought of little else.

WHY DO WE FIGHT LIKE THAT?
I DON'T KNOW I REALLY DON'T
IT MAKES ME FEEL ALL COLD INSIDE
ME TOO
I M SORI'', 'M SORRY

QUITE SUDDENLY, in the months prior to her eleventh birthday, Jaka grew nearly six inches in height. Her feet, which she had seldom noticed, seemed over-large to her and were forever catching on the edge of carpets or getting tangled up together. Her neck, all of a sudden, seemed to her impossibly long and freakishly narrow. Her face appeared unnaturally thin to her and she noticed that her ears stuck out from her head at different angles. Her nose was too big and her nostrils flared in a manner she found *most* unbecoming. Whereas, previously, at the evening meal, she had ignored most of those fragments of conversation drifting about her, narrowing the focus of her attentions to the food on the plate before her (to the exclusion of all else), she now started, visibly, at the sound of laughter, her eyes darting this way and that like those of a trapped fawn. In each *solo voce* whisper she felt certain she heard her name and in each smile and glance, condescension, if not outright mockery. And when, on one of these occasions, Jaka accidentally tipped over her glass with one impossibly long arm, for the second time in as many courses and Nurse (the very soul and substance of sensitivity) declaimed her loudly and generally as a 'clumsy, great beanstalk' it became, alas, altogether too much for a very, *very* young woman to bear. Great swollen tears sprang unbidden to the corners of her eyes, burning briefly at the tender underside of her pupils before rising, precipitously, to underlid's edge and plunging cheekward, then chinward, at last freeing themselves from this centre of humiliation, burrowing their way gratefully into the starched linen of the table cloth even as Jaka's bony shoulders began to hitch, then to heave, then to vibrate in sympathetic and mournful concert with the low, plaintive cry which, by embarrassed fits and humiliated starts, now arose from a throat strangled and self-aware (much to the genuine astonishment of Nurse who still viewed Jaka as being more than slightly retarded)

So abrupt and so pitiful was Jaka's reaction, so heart-wrenching had been that wounded-animal cry etched in patterns of plaintive self-loathing, that even Nurse, for once, was moved to a feeling very nearly resembling sympathy and for several days thereafter was as silent and staring as her young charge, having decided that a short rest from 'Stories for Young Girls' might be just the thing to avert any unseemly outburst of a like kind

Jaka was still afraid to enter that Hidden World certain that the door, once closed behind her, would lock, trapping her (forever?). She contented herself with gazing at the other door, slightly ajar, a dozen steps distant. Though she speculated on the interior of the room (closet?) (hallway?) beyond, it was no longer a gaudy fantasy filled with gems, jewels and precious metals. She pictured, instead, a room very *like* the hallway; unkemp and dirt-streaked; a history preserved and forgotten, ignored; and very much at peace; a tranquil retreat within the pristine and bustling confines of the executive mansion.

To Jaka, the room was already 'hers'.

NUH
NUH
NUH

ON THE MORNING of her eleventh birthday, the beginning of her last year in Palnu, she had come to a decision.

AARDVARK COMMENT

P.O. BOX 1674, STATION 'C', KITCHENER, ONTARIO N2G 4R2

Dear Dave,

No matter what he claims, Larry Young is *not* normal. I mean, anyone who calls himself "Larry Avenger" ... well, you get the idea.

Thanks for exposing the truth.

Sincerely,

Patrick Donley
33 Pomona Road
Worcester, MA
01602

I live but to serve.

★★★★★★★★★★

Dave,

Meg just came to my dorm room, but she wouldn't come in, because of a nasty smell. I think it was my shoes. Converse hi-tops, navy blue. I put them in the trash. I just read Cerebus #117, Jaka's Story 4. The man who runs the cash register at the comic store said I was "discriminating".

Dave McGurgan
101 South Avon Dr.
Claymont, De,
19703

P.S. I think it *does* stink in here.

You see? You *are* discriminating.

★★★★★★★★★★

Dear Dave:

Me and my brother Rob and Mike (uh ... Bannon) and Paul (uh ... Stockton) were talking the other day, and it occurred to us that one of the really big draws for *Cerebus Bi-weekly* is the reprinting of the letter pages. Like, almost all of the extraneous material ... the stories, the covers, the introductions, that sort of thing ... are reprinted and available elsewhere, but this is the first time that you've shown the vision, the character, the yes, I dare say it - the *gumption* to reprint the meat of the book: to wit, the letters. Well, it also occurred to us that, to the best of our vast legal knowledge, the agreement implicit in a letter of comment sort of deal extends to a one-time-only free reprint. After that, you have to renegotiate. Dave, me and the guys want our cut.

Hey, we know you'll understand. You've been a champion of creator's rights, after all; but you know from past experience that we're no strangers to litigation (cf Aardvark Comments in #63 and 66 . don't you wish you could reprint excerpts now?). We mean bidness. Look forward to our Bill of Rights for Letterhacks under separate cover, as soon as we get around to writing it at the Dubuque Summit. Right now, there's a Hawaii 5-0 rerun on, so I'm busy

All my best and - hey - I mean that sincerely,

Derek McCulloch
P.O Box 40430
Berkeley, CA
94704-4430

P.S. Hey, is Jack Lord's hair wacky, or what?

Royalty cheques for all the Aardvark Comments in *Cerebus Bi-weekly*. And people wonder why there's a price increase coming.

★★★★★★★★★★

Dear Gerhard,

Great art, great inking! . .

But, let me just say

When I was young and used to wait,
for Chef Boy-ar-dee to slap the plate
And smorgasbord it with a piece of rye,
and slup saucy strands into my eye
It was real cheap, I have to say
It was real cheap, but I tell you Dave
Though it was cheap I have to say ...
I'd take it over the best Italian spaghetti any day.

Now maybe I'm just a glue-eyed biscuit head without any common sense. But I gotta tell ya .

Before Gerhard,

Great art, great inking! ..

You're truly,

Didoman Wood, Pope
The Unified Church of Man
Columbia "The Lost Camelot"
Maryland 21045

P.S Just because "The Wankers" can't get any, doesn't mean I'm going to start paddling my pud. Besides, what will my girlfriend Mary Jane Deliah think when she goes to milk the cow and the well's all dry?

P.P S. Ooo Wah Wah!
Woo Ahh Ahh!
Oo wa, Wo ah!
Moo! Moo!

Friend of yours, Ger?

★★★★★★★★★★

Dearest,

Gosh, but you carried off that difficult hundred twelfth issue well. I was only in Glasgow to see a couple of bands and perhaps misbehave a little but when I saw the turquoise cover I just HAD to buy it, didn't I? "Darn it," I thought, "look at all these pages - I'd better send my congratulations and maybe some more coffee." This issue was as good as watching "I Dream of Jeannie" six times in a row at 4 o'clock in the morning with rum and tortilla chips and a lovable kitten. No. . Nothing is that good. As good as reading Tolkien underwater perhaps. As good as fainting. As good as fainting because you're reading Tolkien underwater ... I think this is getting rather silly

You printed my letter? How nice! I suppose it's just as well I didn't write anything personal, isn't it? That reminds me, tell that Tracy J. Hall (is she a person or a building?) that I have some graveyard photos that would turn her hair florescent and that listening to too much Grateful Dead melts your psyche and makes your record player very tetchy. The only "dead" fan I know tends to say things like "is my aura on straight" which I don't find particularly endearing. I think I'd rather be a tiny woodland mammal than listen to the Grateful Dead. I'd rather be a footstool than listen to the Spermbirds.

It was very nice of you to acknowledge your UK readers by printing a cover price, but you don't REALLY believe that comic shops pay a blind bit of notice, do you? Capitalism is rife and tuna is getting hard to find again. Snort of disgust. What about just putting "UK - two square meals only"? or perhaps "whip me, beat me, make me feel cheap" or even "guaranteed perhaps speech bubble free almost". The possibilities are endless and that they have not so far appeared can only serve to prove that you are a) intelligent and b) some other word with lots of letters in it.

What else is wonderful? Oh yes, that.

But anyway - did you know that my

old primary school teacher, Miss Prudence McLeod, told me never to start a sentence with the words 'but' 'because' or 'and', finish one with the word 'wildebeest'; be dishonest or go home with them on the first date Because she was such a senile old bint I try to break her rules whenever possible, but still have not managed to think of a sentence beginning with 'and', although her lessons punctuated by flagellation have given me an excellent background for breaking rule 4. And I lied about 3.

Enough grammar! On with whatever it was I was talking about ... oh yes! Your drawings were fab and I really enjoyed the comic although I don't want to spoil you with praise by telling you this, so forget this sentence ever happened. Instead I'll just make fun of you again; and deservedly so.

You never answered my questions! Do you like Daffy Duck or don't you? Is this a touchy subject? Did something traumatic happen to you as you watched "Duck Twacy"? Do I look like someone who takes an enigmatic silence for an answer? Are you coming back to Glasgow? Are they LETTING you into the country again? Huh!

Yours petulantly,

Cassandra the witch
140 Drakies Avenue
Inverness
Scotland

P.S. You can keep my little sister, she was only imaginary anyway.

Yes, yes. I like Daffy Duck very much. And Gerhard and I have been considering a three week Scottish tour; Glasgow, Edinburgh, Glasgow, Edinburgh, Glasgow and so on.

★★★★★★★★★★

Mr Comment:

Life Sucks. Ollie "Dickhead" North is a HERO, and all of my razorblades have gone dull. Cerebus is much more confusing if you don't buy each issue. So I think I'll go out and slam dunk my head against the wall until things seem more lucid

Hey congratulations on issue 100. At least I got that one. The cool pix of Storm on pages 6 and 7 really churned up my hormones. You should have given Captain "stick-up-his-butt" America a slightly smaller part, though, he always gives me serious constipation

But really, thanks for not being a jerk-off and thanks for not making issue 100 a big shithead celebration with cameos by every costumed dweeb with nerdy ideals (Leading the fight against bad B.O.) Maybe you should have stuck a few nude pix of Madonna in there. And Vanna White too.

Weirdy yrs,
SHATTERED
Rt 2 Box 64L
Lockhart, TX
78644

P.S Don't make fun of my name, man Any guy with a name like "Aardvark Comment", fer chrissakes, should be careful what he says.

You have a point.

★★★★★★★★★★

Dave,

I'm listening to *Some Girls* by the Rolling Stones so I just thought I'd write. American girls want everything in the world you can possibly imagine. They do, too. It's a real problem

Michael Robbins
3590 Clubheights Drive
Colorado Springs, CO
80906

Whoa. Hey. *Tell* me about it.

★★★★★★★★★★

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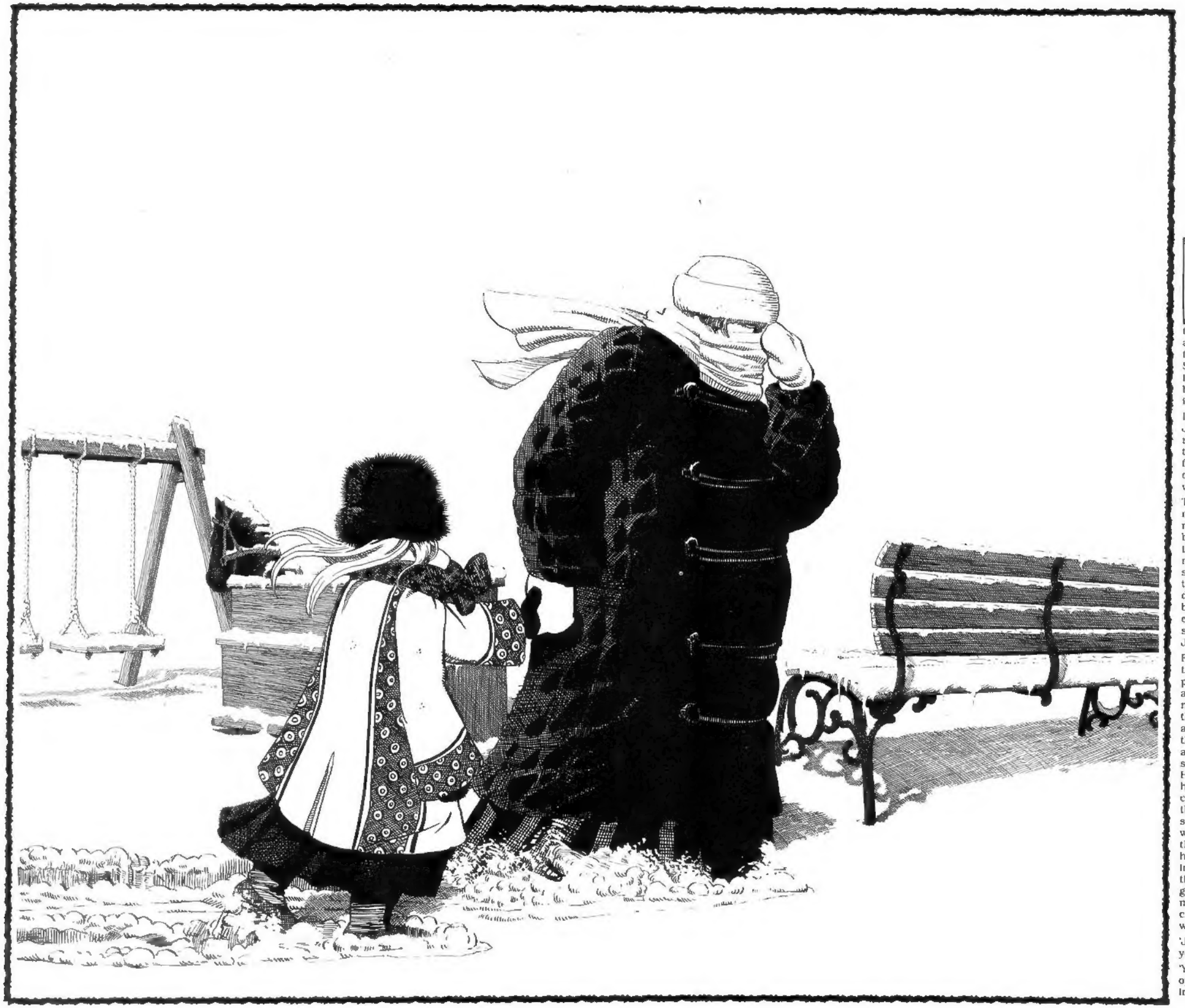

IT WAS A PEARL - white and foggy winter's morn; the sky and the earth a perfect tapestry of nothingness which enfolded passers-by, limiting the range of their vision to a few steps in any direction, rendering all and everything in muted shades of blue and gray. Shapes appeared out of the mist; coalescing; growing distinct; showing detail; before passing once more into grayness; into non-existence.

Into this barren realm came Nurse and Jaka (nine years of age, now), puffing noisily in their exertions, leaving twin trails of churned and clotted snow, fresh-fallen, in their wake, like a proud merchant vessel and dutiful tug plying the waters of some be-calmed sea.

The merchant vessel in question held one mittened hand before her face; her eyes now closed; now opened a fraction (for the briefest moment) every dozen or so steps to ensure fidelity to her present course; now shut tightly once more. To Nurse, snow blindness was a permanent condition caused by opening one's eyes out-of-doors and looking directly at snow. Thus, being actively engaged in preserving her eyesight, Nurse failed to notice the first signs of interest in her surroundings that Jaka had exhibited in nearly three years.

For their route was carrying them past the playground; a place Nurse had scrupulously avoided since the 'scandalous adventuring' episode. Though Jaka had no conscious recollection of her life before the 'incident', something within her stirred at the sight of Magic, drifting lazily out of the white air, not twenty feet from her, adorned by a blanket of snow, so that he seemed more a vision than a solid object. Her eyes, thirsting, drank in the sight of him, straining; as if by straining, she could see through him; as if by seeing through him, she might have some understanding of the sensations he roused within her. As each step drew them further and further away, she turned her head (which felt bound to him by some invisible force), turned and twisted, until the small bones in her neck popped and ground at the unaccustomed effort. In a matter of a few moments, as the mists closed across those proud flanks, all was white and dream-like once more.

'Jaka,' Nurse snapped, 'Have you got your eyes closed?'

'Yes'm', she lied, for Jaka's eyes were open now, indeed. The time of remembering had begun.